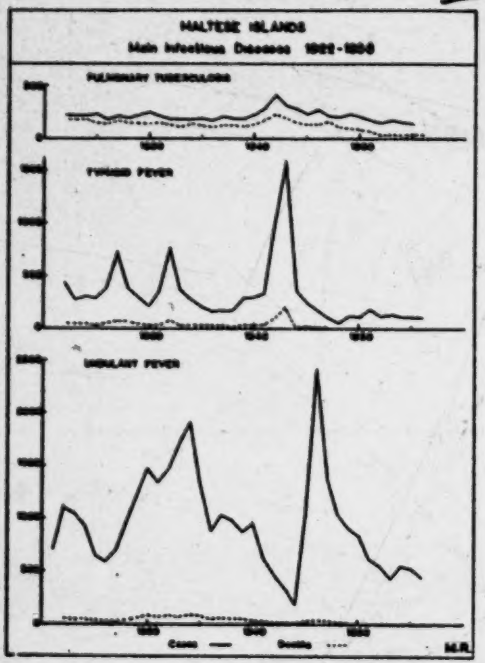

Fig. 66 Maltese Islands: Main Infectious Diseases.

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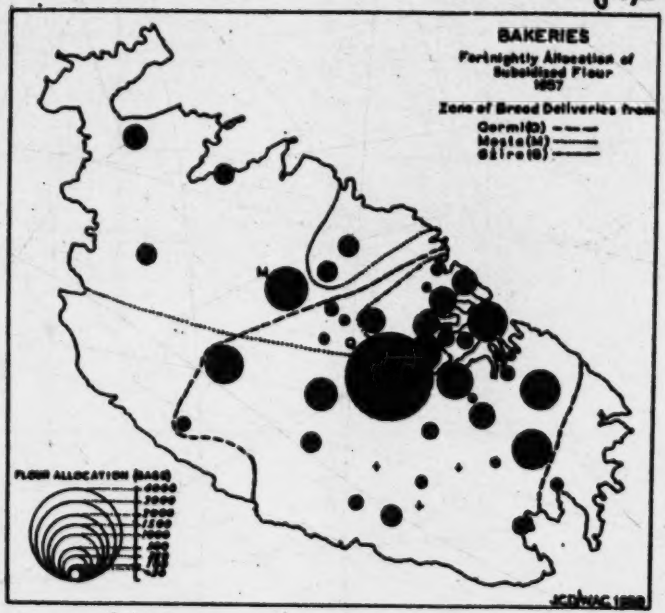

Fig. 67 Bakeries.

1: Bowen-Jones et al. K-5 (1955-1958) 1961
EZ6 Malta EZ6

1: Bowen-Jones et al. K-5 (1955-1958) 1961
EZ6 Malta EZ6

tion can read, travel and make contact directly and vicariously with the world outside. Emigration too has tested the strength of the Faith. In consequence, we can now find in Malta a historical cross-section represented in spatial distribution. At one extreme one can meet in Sliema agnostic Maltese who never go near a church; at the other, in rural Gozo, one can find general obedience to the Bishop's instructions. All societies are heterogeneous in this respect but in Malta the strain of division within society is particularly great because of the existence of so many other cleavages. The reaction of the Church to this new situation has been dual in character. In the first place the Church itself has taken official action. Reform and correction, the imposition of rigorous film and book censorship, the series of edicts on dress and on behaviour have accompanied research, such as that of Abbé Houtart (22), into the needs of the people. Secondly, there have appeared the lay organisations with the avowed intent of redressing the balance. M.U.S.E.U.M. and Catholic Action before World War II, Cana, Legion of Mary, Social Action, the Holy Name Society and many others of foreign and indigenous origin since 1945 have developed in the conurbation where the challenge to the Church was strongest (23).

Financially the Church is still strong, owning as it does some 19 per cent. of the agricultural land of the Islands and an unverifiable total of urban property (24). Politically, the strength of the Church rests on its hold over the minds and hearts of the people. It is not necessary for the Church to take much overt action to demonstrate its power.

As a last vignette of the changing Maltese socio-economic complex we may consider some aspects of recent research on a useful indicator of social change, the bread baking industry (25).

The purchasing, distribution and processing of wheat and wheat flour, remains as it has been for centuries, Government controlled. When the Knights established their capital at Valletta and when the suburb-outwork of Floriana was built, great stone-chamber granaries were hewn out of the solid rock, developed versions of the much older 'bell-pits'. These underground granaries were stocked by the official organisation, the *Università*, and the grain periodically distributed at controlled prices. This siege-system, necessitated by dependence on imports, was abolished in the early nineteenth century, and the newly established Board of Trade contented itself with licensing importations. As a measure of agricultural protection and for the raising of revenue, duties were levied on these shipments. During the twentieth century, and culminating in the emergency measures of the beleaguered Islands during World War II, controls became tighter and grain prices heavily subsidised.

During the period of urbanisation and more especially during the last siege the general practice of home baking rapidly declined in Malta, although in Gozo it still persists. In the latter island there was in 1957 only one full-time and one part-time commercial bakery, while in Malta there were 201. All food grains produced for sale in the Island should legally be sent to licensed flour mills for blending. Imports, almost entirely of hard Canadian grain, are made by the Department of Trade and by the Victualling Yard in H.M. Dockyard. Ninety-seven per cent. of all flour issued for ration-bread making is subsidised, but local estimates suggest that up to 50 per cent. is used for making other products, this illegally used flour being sold at a discount.

Fig. 67 shows the distribution of bakeries in Malta, their importance and the main distribution areas as they existed in 1957. Only two villages in 1950 and one in 1957 - Safi - did not possess their own bakeries. This however is not indicative of closed fields of distribution but only of the multiplicity and the small-scale of the enterprises. Of the 35 districts, 32 imported bread from and 17 exported bread to other areas. Over half the 15,000 bags of subsidised flour issued in 1950 eventually found their way as bread outside the receiving districts. Of this inter-regional trade, Qormi supplied almost 80 per cent. Very briefly the points of interest are as follows. Qormi, which in 1957 had 48 bakeries, has always been the traditional baking centre, partly because of its central situation, but mainly as noted in Chapter VIII because of its situation in

[See p. 198 -- Analyst]

1: Bowen-Jones et al. K-5 (1955-1958) 1961
EZ6 Malta EZ6

a dry-farming cereal region. The other main centres are of more recent growth and reflect a variety of factors, Mosta as a regional centre, Gżira and Msida as suitably placed coastal sites within the conurbation. Secondly, the distribution of bakeries does not correspond directly with variations in population density but rather reflects those variations in an exaggerated form. If we omit Qormi from consideration, Fig. 67 indicates fairly accurately the strength or weakness of traditional society in inverse ratio to the strength of commercial bakery development. Thirdly, the inter-regional 'trade' in bread, together with evidence we have no space to consider such as the development of travelling shops, etc., shows the importance of the new mobility which is rapidly breaking down old parochialisms. Uniformity, homogeneity, openness to world ideas, these are the social virtues lauded in the twentieth century, which are being inculcated in Malta most effectively by the delivery vans of the new commercialism. The decline of local individualisms is aesthetically sad; it is also dangerous in that the smoother the appearance of the social emulsion the less heed is paid to the degree of real cohesion between its members.

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23. Source material concerning these religious activities ranges from the *Annario della Diocesi di Malta* before 1939; and the Catholic Directory of the Maltese Islands 1959, the Archbishop's Palace; to C.T.S. Publications and reports of Lay Organisations.
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25. CHARLTON, W. A.: *op. cit.*

159 He insists that the Government should stop imports of new
472 machines in face of the present decline in the demand for
407 contract deep-plowing. He sees himself and many farmer-
479 contractors like him going out of business in the near future.

CASE XII

[178] This farmer (working 35 tmion, including seven irrigable) was among the first to acquire machinery in the 1930's. He speaks of the slow start made in deep-plowing on account of the suspicion of most farmers who continued to use the mule or horse-drawn wooden plow exclusively for some years. Mechanized plowing is now fully accepted, he says, and, for the contracting plowman, is still a most profitable venture despite the present fierce competition for business.

CASE XX

159 Whereas CASE XIV-XIX have concerned plowing and threshing
407 contractors whose own fields are of secondary importance as a
241 source of income, this man is typical of the growing number of
434 farmers who see mechanization as the means whereby they them-
selves can cultivate a large holding. With his single tractor he cultivates some 35 tmien single handed and supplements his income from this holding by only a limited amount of contract-plowing in the summer season.

[245] He notes that a further reason for the decline in demand
[178] for the deep-plow on contract is the recent increase in the area under vines (due to the steady demand for wine-grapes by local vintners).

CASE XXI

159 This Gozitan is a part-time contract plowman whose main
256 occupation is not farming but baking. His father was a salt-
241 seller but this business went to a brother shortly before the
407 1939-45 War whereupon this man decided to go in for full-time
472 contract plowing and threshing. For many years he remained
[477] the sole such operator in his village and business grew. However in the present decade competition from new tractor operators has "halved the work available in the summer plowing season" for his plows and threshing machine. This prompted him to build a bakery in 1954 to which he has since devoted all his time. However the tractor and threshing machine are still retained and are worked by a son as the demand arises.

CASE XXII

159 Another Gozitan, this English-speaking and astute man is
441 not himself a contract plowman but is a dealer and Agent for
472 tractors, rotary cultivators and other agricultural machinery.
407 His father began the import of tractors to the Island, but those were wheeled and soon found to be unsatisfactory for local conditions. The first 'crawling' tractor was intro-
[191] duced in 1939 and has since been found to be well suited to the steep paths and fields and the small plots in Gozo, especially in wet weather. Since 1951 the use of rotary cultivators has spread rapidly through the Island and has led to a sharp decline in the work available to the deep-plowing tractors. Of twelve of the latter at present in the Island some three or four are normally unused in the season. This agent sperks of an agreement among the tractor operators of Gozo to limit individual spheres of operation during the 1957 plowing season.

[178] Like CASE XIV this man has been prepared to introduce new implements. His father was the first to import motor pumps (1920), while he himself brought in the first cultivator in 1951. His latest idea has been the import of harvesting machines, but the very limited success of the first ten which he brought in has discouraged him from buying any more. He observes that the fields of Gozo are too small for mechanization on this scale and that the harvester leaves a lot of straw in the ground which the farmer insists must be collected for animal fodder.